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Wildlife Leaflet 234

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DIRECTIONS FOR DESTROYING HOUSE MICE

Prepared in the Division of Predator and Rodent Control

TRAPPING

House mice in the home, on a small farm, or in a business establishment may often be kept under control by trapping. The small wooden base snap traps and a small all-metal snap trap now on the market give good results. Their low cost makes it practicable to set a dozen or more so use plenty. Rebait and reset all traps each evening and place them in such manner that the mice will pass over the trigger in following their natural runways along walls, behind objects, or wherever partial concealment is afforded. Traps are most effective when set near the garbage pail, in the pantry, kitchen, or cellar, or wherever a mouse is likely to be attracted by food.

Fresh bait is essential and preferably should be tied to the trigger of the trap. Fresh bread, cake, and doughnuts are dependable baits, but these should be varied with others, as peanut butter, chocolate candy, cheese, fried bacon, sardines, apple parings, nut meats, or bananas. Rolled oats, flour, or other cereal may be sprinkled lightly over the trap as an additional attraction.

It is frequently possible to use the small wooden base trap without any food bait by making a "trail set". To do this, the first procedure is to enlarge the small trigger by cutting a piece of corrugated boxing cardboard the size to fit inside the square wire loop of the trap and then slipping this cardboard section onto the trigger. The resulting platform provides a much larger trigger surface. This modified trap is placed in a mouse runway with the trigger at right angles to the wall or other solid object. An inspection every day or so to remove any dead mice and to keep the trap set is sufficient.

POISONING

For the control of mice on a larger scale, poisoning is sometimes necessary. Two kinds of lethal baits may be used, depending on the location and local conditions. One is a stable poisoned bait that will remain effective for a long period of time, and the other is a fresh bait to be prepared with a poison and used at once.

Stable baits. - The use of lethal baits is often desired for the protection of property in homes or camps that are used periodically and shut up for part of the year; also in certain other kinds of buildings. Three lethal baits are suggested:

(1) A simple method of preparation is to mix one-eighth ounce of powdered strychnine alkaloid with an equal quantity of baking soda and stir thoroughly in 1 quart of rolled oats or corn meal. For use on a small scale.

(2) Mix 1 tablespoonful of gloss starch in one-fourth teacupful of cold water and stir into three-fourths pint of boiling water to make a thin clear paste. Mix 1 ounce of powdered strychnine alkaloid with 1 ounce of baking soda and stir into the starch to a smooth creamy mass free of lumps. Stir in one-half pint of heavy corn syrup and 1 tablespoonful of glycerin or petrolatum. Apply to 10 pounds of milo maize or canary seed and mix thoroughly to coat each kernel. Spread on paper to dry. The canary seed, or bird seed (Phalaris canariensis), can usually be obtained from bird dealers or seed stores and the maize from feed stores. For use on an extensive scale.

Lethal baits thus prepared will last indefinitely when kept in a dry place. They may be placed in small, covered boxes that have one or two holes in each side, slightly larger than 25-cent pieces. These holes allow the mice to enter the box but should be cut high enough from the floor to prevent the scattering of the bait material outside the box. The boxes are effective when left in places frequented by the rodents. They provide a permanent poison supply that is available to the mice at all times, without some of the dangers of scattered mouse bait. Such containers should be marked plainly with red paint, "POISON". Care should be taken to make them inaccessible to children, irresponsible persons, or domestic animals. All utensils used in preparing lethal baits should be washed thoroughly or destroyed.

Fresh baits. - For immediate use there are some fresh bait materials with which certain poisons may be mixed. A few formulas are given.

(1) Dice apples or sweet potatoes into one-half inch cubes. Dust 20 ounces of either bait material, while stirring gently, with one-eighth ounce of powdered strychnine alkaloid. Other poisons may be substituted for the strychnine. Powdered zinc phosphide may be used in the same proportion and manner.

(2) If there are no household pets (dogs or cats) to be endangered, hamburger, or a mixture of 2 parts ground bacon and 6 parts of a blend of ground dried bread crumbs and cake crumbs, may be used as bait materials. One ounce of zinc phosphide, or 2 ounces of arsenic trioxide, may be mixed with 10 pounds of one of these bait materials.

Fresh baits prepared with zinc phosphide do not remain effective very long, varying from 2 days to a week, but generally as long as the baits remain acceptable. In dry or oily baits the zinc phosphide retains its toxicity for several months if kept in a dry place and in tight containers. Fresh baits should be exposed in places readily accessible to mice for quick detection of the bait is desired.

CATS AS MOUSERS

House cats are sometimes effective in removing mice and may be stimulated to increased effort by reducing their supply of other food. However, good mousers may be destructive of bird life if allowed freedom, and should be kept shut up during the birdnesting season.

REPELLING MICE

Certain odors and substances are obnoxious to mice and are of value, therefore, in repelling them from stored products. Flake naphthalene is one of the most effective of the deterrents and when scattered over and around bags of seeds, overstuffed furniture, books, clothing, and other articles may protect them effectively from mouse depredations. Inasmuch as naphthalene becomes dissipated in the air with time, repeated applications are often necessary. Because of its odor it is not advisable to use naphthalene to repel mice from foodstuffs. Powdered sulphur and also lime have been used successfully in protecting such stored grain as corn and sheaf oats.

Where foodstuffs are not involved and it would be suitable to use certain materials as sprays, there are several compounds that may be suggested, such as kerosene, creosote, blackleaf 40 or nicotine sulphate, and also spray emulsions containing copper oleate, or copper carbonate, or lime-sulphur. Oils of peppermint and of wintergreen, also tung oil, are repellents to mice. Insulating materials such as sawdust, ground paper and the like, may be protected from mice by the addition of ammonium sulphate.